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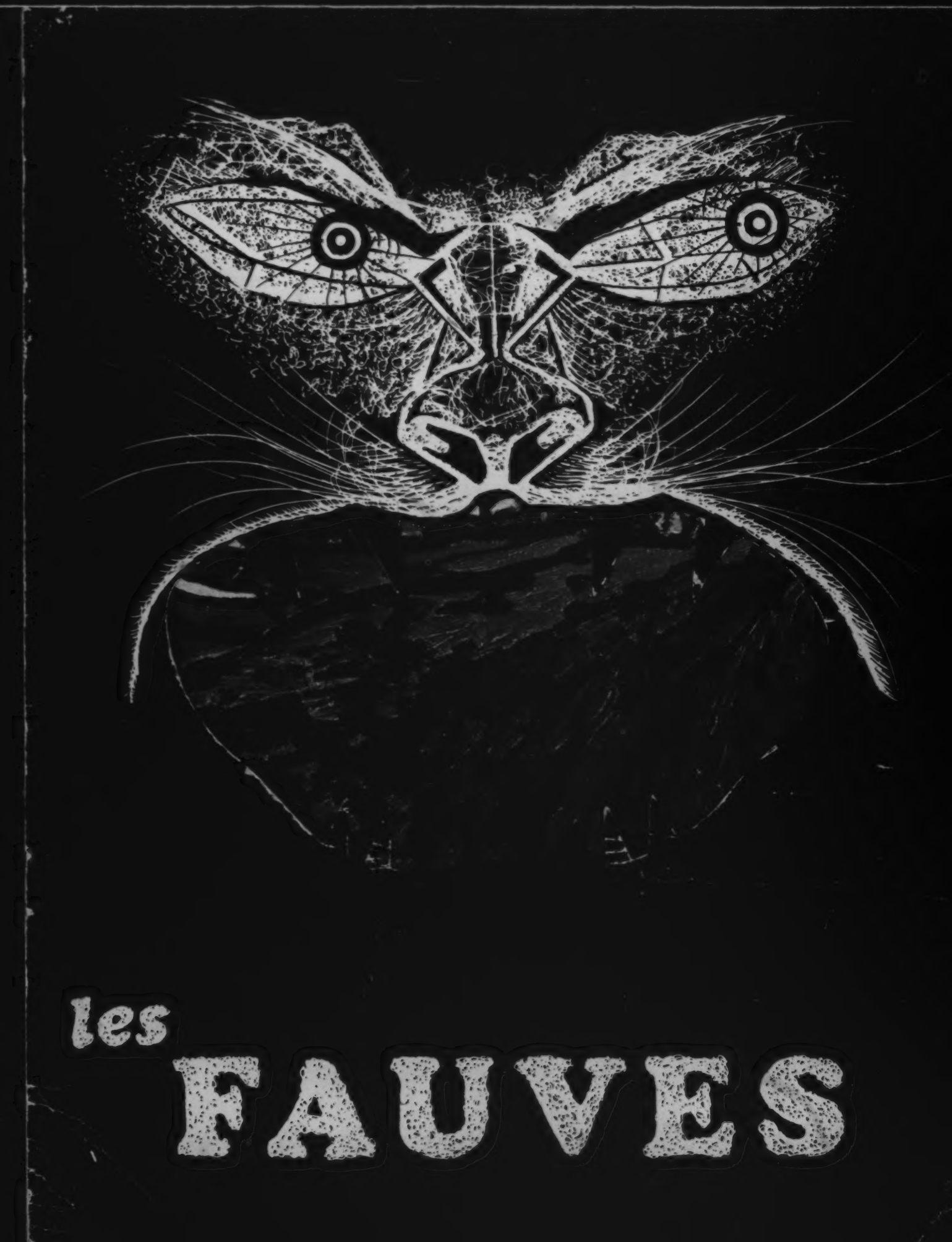
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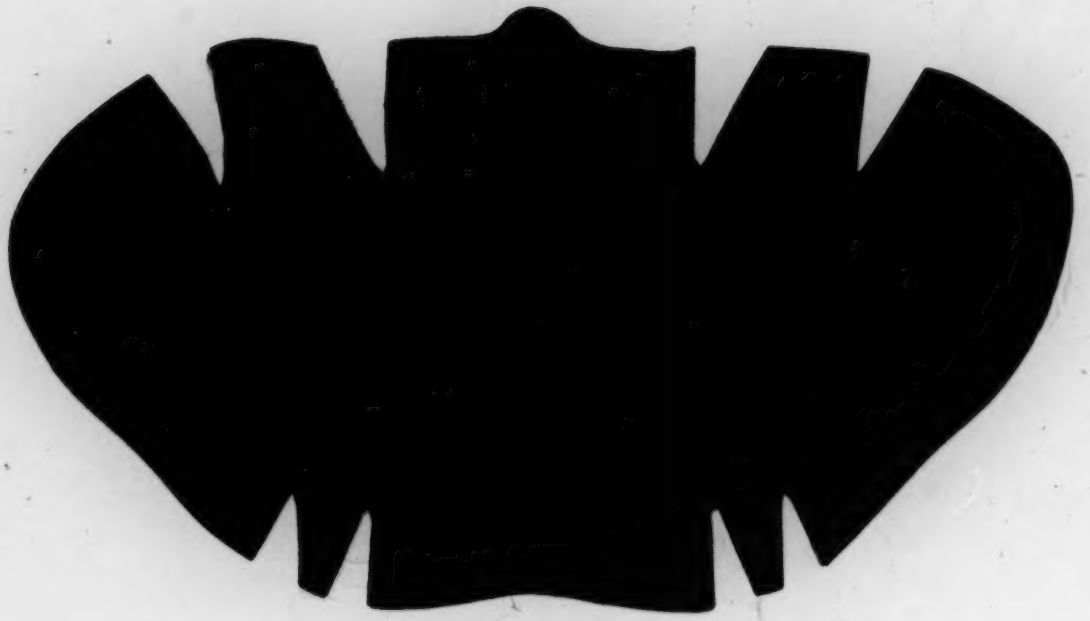

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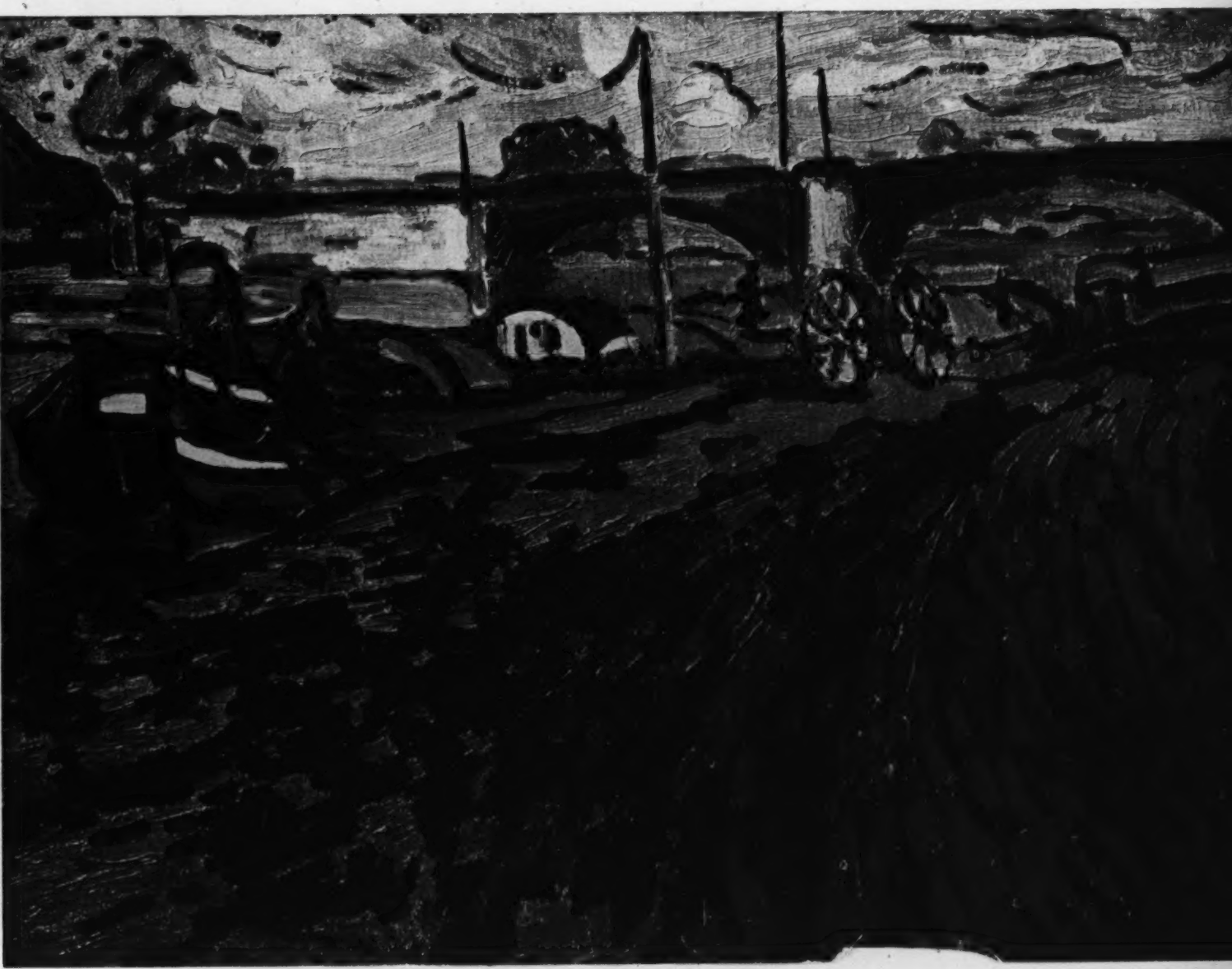
*Vlaminck*, The Bridge at Chatou



COURTAULD INSTITUTE

# The Fauves and their Purpose

Most, if not all of the ideas of fauvism, are found either in germ or clearly formulated in the various articles of faith inserted by Gauguin at the end of the manuscript of *Noa Noa (Racontars d'un Rapin, Diverses Choses)*. Matisse, who was unacquainted with these texts when he initiated "fauvism"—as I have said, he insists that he doesn't know the meaning of the word—discovered this long afterwards. The fact is that these "scattered notes, without continuity, like dreams, like the scraps we call life," seem singularly new, and singularly free from the constraints and prejudices in which painting was then entrapped. There is no trace, in these notes, of the sophism with which the plump madonnas and Papuan Christs of the exile of Pont-Aven or Atanouana justify the awkwardness of their attitudes. Listen for example to this: "There are no holes in nature. In nature, all tones, even the most garish, fuse in invariable harmony. There are holes only in paintings. In paintings, it is values that destroy the harmony of the tones, by the introduction of elements alien to color and partaking of chiaroscuro." An astonishing sentence, anticipating the fauves by quite a few years. Indeed, what the fauves tried to do was precisely to absorb discord in a harmonic order. Nothing new about that, you say? But there is: they ceased, in principle at least, to resort to the domesticity of symbols and to the protection of a mathematics that formerly ordained the resonance of painting with no less authority than it did the music of the spheres, not to mention the far less pleasant, because less silent, music of the machine. The paroxysmal dissonances, the excesses which surprise and disconcert us in daily life were thenceforward assimilated to a calm which was no longer habitual, but constant, a calm to be achieved only at great cost, precisely because of our beloved habits which can only yield its derisory counterfeit, constantly diminished by use or jostled by accident. . . .

Hence the main effort of the fauve group has been directed towards an alliance between unifying visual perception and fragmentary, mutually antagonistic colorings. The aim of this pact was to naturalize and pacify excess and enable it to exert its remaining vitalizing powers without our knowing it. This effort was oriented towards a coherent attitude, towards a rational conquest, including in its gains reason itself, of the unity which Baudelaire divined in Delacroix, this painter's *Deus absconditus* which he defined as the "relation between things." But in this campaign, mysticism and effusion are kept to a minimum.

**Georges Duthuit**

Color plate and text above from *The Fauvist Painters* by G. Duhuit, The Documents of Modern Art Series, Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., N. Y., 1950.

# The Fauves and After

Art in a state of *crisis* has in the past been confined to individual attempts. The Fauves, unquestionably, were the first to present it as a collective activity. It is for this reason, above all, that we are indebted to them. Before Fauvism, painters spied on each other, sometimes lifting ideas — one thinks of the wall between Van Gogh and Gauguin — but suddenly, under the pressure of a clear-sighted violence, exaltation spread and communication was reached. With all due respect to legitimate precedents, the acquired force which stimulated the strong also swept along with it the more fragile, and their works, created in the joyousness of this action, sparkled with a buoyancy these same artists were never later able to produce. Pictorial innovations, of course, but loaded with a disquieting beauty that springs from the destructive urge they express, from the fury which none of the Fauves, perhaps, felt personally to such an extent, but which was augmented by the power of participation. Born under the sign of contagion, Fauvism grew and exhausted itself like an epidemic.*

A dangerous precedent, nevertheless, had been established. Again and again the *crisis* recurs and extends itself, with Cubism, with Dada, with Surrealism. . . . Painters' problems which were, we are told, the chief concern for the Fauves, are today replaced by disputes of a less palpable character, even if they stem from the *crisis* that the Fauves themselves set into motion. The choice between being an "artist" or being an *intellectual* will henceforth become a choice between *crisis* in art and art of development, between rapid consummation and attending risks, and the slow-motion of predecessors. The reclassification which will occur sooner or later in the light of these facts will result in many curious surprises.

Today Fauvism commends itself to us mainly as an extreme instance of this *crisis* in art. So far there accrues to Van Gogh alone the triple advantage of being considered insane, a mediocre painter and of dying young. As for the Fauves, their manner does not become boring. On the contrary, by avoiding dullness, it attains supreme elegance, which is preferable, it would seem, to such interminable old faithfuls as Monet's Impressionism and Signac's Divisionism. It is striking that the Fauves remain very much immune, protected, it seems, by a deliberate and timely withdrawal from an adventure before it became a method, thus fully retaining its dazzling magnitude.

**Robert Lebel**

*from Last Roars of the Fauves in Paru, March 1950.*

*It is probable that Fauvism will not always seem strictly confined to a closed group. Already the discovery of some works by the American Alfred Maurer painted in Paris as early as 1907 proves that in fact he belongs with the Fauves.

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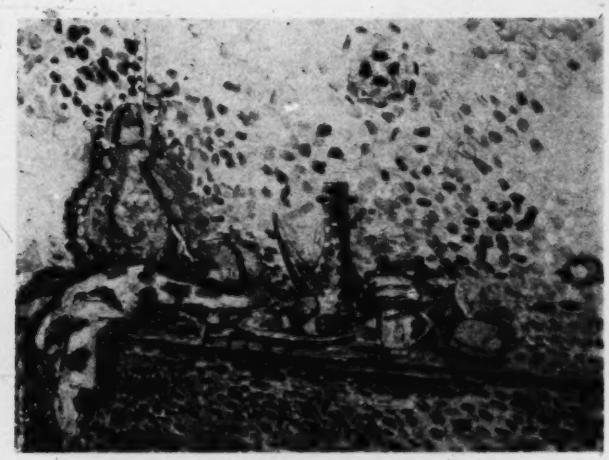

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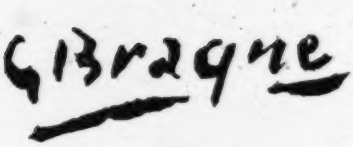
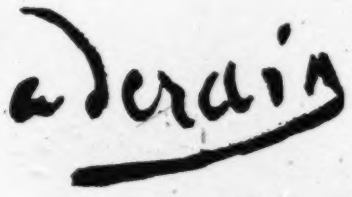


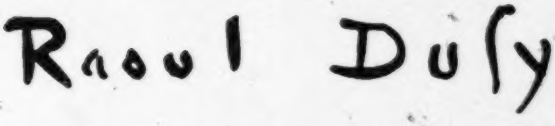
**GEORGES BRAQUE, 1882.**

1 Estaque, 1906 14¾ x 18"
2 River, 1906 23¾ x 32"
3 Seated Nude, 1906 24 x 19¾"
4 Collioure, 1907 14½ x 18"



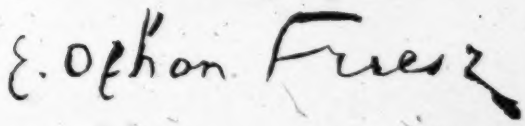
**ANDRE DERAIN, 1880.**

5 Trees, 1904 23½ x 28¾"
6 Head, 1904 12¼ x 8⅛"
7 Estaque, 1905 20¾ x 25¼"
8 Port, 1905 28½ x 35½"
9 Belfry at Collioure, 1905 13 x 16"
10 Portrait of Matisse, 1905 12¾ x 15½"
11 London Tower Bridge, 1905 26 x 39"
12 Reflection on the Water, 1905 32 x 39"



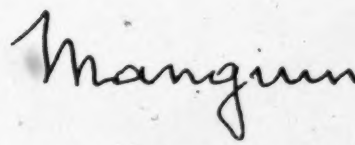
**RAOUL DUFY, 1877.**

13 The Beach at St. Adresse, 1906 21 x 26"
14 14 July, 1906 13 x 16"
15 The Port at Le Havre, 1906 21¾ x 18"
16 The Terrace at the Beach, 1906 18½ x 22"
17 Port, 1907 21¼ x 25½"
18 Boardwalk at St. Adresse, 1907 25½ x 31½"



**E. OTHON FRIESZ, 1879-1949.**

19 Ciotat, 1905 13 x 16"
20 Cassis Sur Mer, 1906 15 x 18¼"
21 Honfleur, 1907 41½ x 45½"



**HENRI MANGUIN, 1874-1949.**

22 Nude, 1904 24 x 19¾"
23 14 July at St. Tropez, 1905 24¼ x 19¾"

*All numbers 1-46 are canvases in oil.

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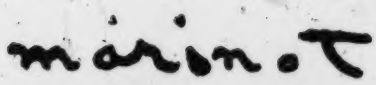
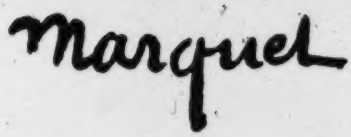


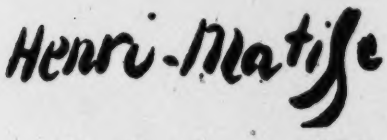
**M. MAURICE MARINOT 1882.**

24 Interior with Still Life 36 x 28½"



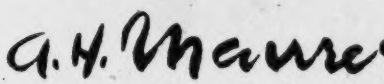
**ALBERT MARQUET, 1875-1947**

25 Nude in the Studio, 1900 21¾ x 18"



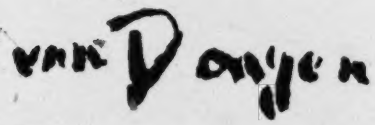
**HENRI MATISSE, 1869.**

26 The Farm, 1896 15 x 18¼"
27 Still Life with Napkin, 1904-05 10¾ x 14"
28 Italienne, 1905 16½ x 13½"
29 Landscape, 1906 18 x 21¾"
30 Pastorale, 1906 16 x 13"
31 The Cucumbers, 1907 15 x 18"
32 Geranium Plant, Fruit, 1908 38½ x 31½"



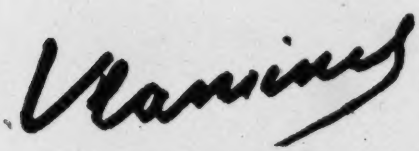
**ALFRED H. MAURER, 1868-1932**

33 Landscape, 1907 21½ x 18"



**KEES VAN DONGEN, 1877.**

34 Clown, ca. 1906 28¾ x 23½"



**MAURICE DE VLAMINCK, 1876.**

35 Trees of Chatou, 1903 21¼ x 25½"
36 Houses at Chatou, 1903 32 x 39½"
37 Landscape with Tugboat, 1905 23½ x 28¾"
38 The Picnic, 1905 35 x 45½"
39 Still Life with Lemons, 1905 19¾ x 25½"
40 Still Life, 1905 18¼ x 21½"
41 The Olive Tree, 1905 21½ x 26"
42 Woman with Dog, 1906 29 x 23½"
43 Still Life with Fish, 1906 15 x 21¾"
44 The Blue House, 1906 21½ x 25½"
45 Woman in Red Coat, 1906 21½ x 17"
46 Pennant at the Port, 1907 21 x 24"

# Acknowledgment

The Gallery is grateful to Mms. Georges Duthuit and Robert Lebel for their illuminating texts in the foreword, and to Mms. Robert Lebel and H. P. Roché for their assistance in obtaining loans from French collections. Acknowledgment with thanks is made to Sr. Umbro Apollonio, Head of Archives, for his cooperation in dispatching paintings direct from the Biennale, Venice. The Gallery extends its thanks for generous loans from the following collections in France: Anonymous, Mme. L. Bourdon, Galerie Espace, Mme. O. Friesz, Mlle. Henry, M. Robert Lebel, M. Henri Lefebvre, M. Pierre Levy, Collection Manguin, Mme. A. Marquet, M. André Martinais; in Switzerland: Anonymous, Dr. Milton Guggenheim, M. Fritz Gygi, Dr. Willi Raeber; in U.S.A.: Anonymous, Albert E. Gallatin Collection; Philadelphia Museum of Art: Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Juviler, Dr. and Mrs. Norman Laskey, Mr. Robert Lehman, Mrs. Max Miller, Joseph Winterbotham Collection: The Art Institute of Chicago. The antique frames for this exhibition have been furnished by Julius Lowy Inc.

Cover by Jimmy Ernst.

**Sidney Janis Gallery · 15 East 57, N. Y.**

**13 November through 23 December 1950**